



# Dress Code and General Conduct in the Perioperative Environment

## EVIDENCE INFORMED PRACTICE TOOLS

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Winnipeg Regional Health Authority  
Office régional de la santé de Winnipeg  
Caring for Health À l'écoute de notre santé

## PURPOSE AND INTENT

- To promote evidence-based standards of practice for surgical attire, related apparel, and general conduct in the perioperative environment.
- To reduce the number of microorganisms in the environment and patient's risk for developing surgical site infections (SSIs).
- To promote a safe environment for all patients and personnel entering the perioperative environment.

## 1. Practice Outcomes

- 1.1. Implementation of evidence-based standards of practice as directed in this Evidence Informed Practice Tool (EIPT) at all surgical sites.
- 1.2. Compliance of all personnel entering the semi-restricted and restricted areas of the perioperative environment to dress code guidelines.
- 1.3. Foster awareness and education of dress code practices in the perioperative environment.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. Review of current practices and existing policies at WRHA surgical sites.
- 2.2. Policies from other jurisdictions reviewed and current literature review conducted.
- 2.3. Identification of gaps in recommendations and standards when compared to submitted documents.
- 2.4. This guideline is intended for use by sites and programs (internal and external to the WRHA), and to set dress code and surgical attire expectations for personnel.

## 3. Definitions

- 3.1. **Additional Attire and Related Apparel:** Cosmetics/fragrances, fingernails, jewelry/wristwatches, nametags, maintenance and housekeeping department personnel attire, and visitor's attire.
- 3.2. **Perioperative Environment:** Includes the semi-restricted and restricted areas of the operating rooms (ORs), as well as all other areas where surgery/invasive procedures may be performed (e.g. cardiac catheterization lab, radiology departments, endoscopy suites, etc.)
- 3.3. **Personal Protective Attire:** Protective equipment used in the Perioperative setting which includes, but is not limited to waterproof, fluid-resistant gowns, lead aprons, eyewear with side shields and/or face-shields/visors, sterile/non-sterile gloves, special procedure masks or respirators, disposable shoe covers, and isolation gowns/masks.
- 3.4. **Restricted Areas:** Includes the OR and procedure room. OR personnel in this area are required to wear full surgical attire and cover all head and facial hair, including sideburns, beards, and necklines.
- 3.5. **Semi-Restricted Area:** Includes the peripheral support areas of the surgical suite and has storage areas for sterile and clean supplies, work areas for storage and processing instruments, and corridors leading to the restricted areas of the surgical suite.

- 3.6. **Surgical Attire:** Nonsterile apparel designed for the perioperative practice setting that includes two-piece pantsuits, scrub dresses, and head coverings. Long sleeved (facility laundered) cover jackets may be worn.
- 3.7. **Unrestricted Area:** Area that is not defined as semi-restricted or restricted. Includes a central control point for designated personnel to monitor the entrance of patients, personnel, and materials into the semi-restricted areas. For instance, locker rooms, break rooms, offices, waiting rooms, the preoperative admission area, post-anesthesia care units (PACUs), and access to procedure rooms (endoscopy rooms, laser treatment rooms). Street clothes are permitted in this area.

## 4. Practice Guidelines

### 4.1 Surgical attire requirements:

- 4.1.1 Surgical attire is the property of the healthcare facility and shall not leave the internal environment of the facility.
- 4.1.2 All individuals entering semi-restricted and restricted areas shall don freshly hospital laundered scrub attire prior to entering the perioperative environment.
- 4.1.3 Personnel shall change into street clothes whenever they leave the healthcare facility or when traveling outdoors between buildings.
- 4.1.4 After removing the surgical attire, surgical attire shall be returned to designated receptacle for washing or disposal. Surgical attire shall not be hung in the locker to be worn again at a later time.
- 4.1.5 Surgical attire and personal protective attire shall be changed immediately if it becomes visibly soiled or wet (blood, body fluids, moist with perspiration, etc.).

### 4.2 All individuals entering the semi-restricted or restricted area of the OR shall wear surgical attire. Exception: visitors (such as maintenance personnel, parents, law enforcement) may wear disposable one-piece coveralls or bunny suits with head covering provided by the site.

- 4.2.1 Two-piece pantsuit top shall be tucked into the pants or shall be close fitting. Drawstrings should be tucked into pants.
- 4.2.2 Long sleeved jackets laundered by the facility may be worn by non-scrubbed personnel within restricted and semi-restricted area. When worn, jackets shall be close fitting, fastened at the front, and cover the arms. When worn during the performance of preoperative skin antisepsis, the sleeve should be tight fitting. Otherwise, a sterile sleeve may be worn to reduce the risk of contamination of the prepped area. Jackets shall be changed daily and laundered within the hospital facility after each use.
- 4.2.3 Lab coats cannot be worn within the perioperative environment. If worn over scrubs outside of the perioperative environment, they must be kept clean. Recommendations include laundering at least weekly or whenever dirty/soiled with bodily fluids. Guidance for home laundering includes the use of hot water, with bleach, and heated drying (AORN (2019)).
- 4.2.4 Personal clothing (e.g. undergarments, long sleeve shirts) that cannot be completely covered by surgical attire shall not be worn.
- 4.2.5 Head covering shall be worn to cover the scalp, hair, and beard.

- Head covering should not be removed when leaving the perioperative environment, as hair and microbes may be shed onto the scrub attire.
  - Used single use head coverings should be removed at the end of the shift, when changing into street clothes, or when contaminated and should be discarded in a designated receptacle.
  - Personnel who wear home laundered cloth hats shall wear a disposable bouffant cap over the cloth hat (ORNAC, 2019)
- 4.2.6 Headgear worn due to cultural or religious reasons should be completely covered with an appropriate disposable hat.

**4.3 All personnel shall wear a single, disposable, surgical mask in restricted areas and/or in the presence of open sterile supplies. The type of mask that offers the most appropriate protection for the specific circumstances shall be worn.**

Masks shall be:

- 4.3.1 Well-fitting and cover nose and mouth.
- 4.3.2 Worn in designated restricted areas
- 4.3.3 Worn during sterile procedures and when patients are present in the OR/procedure room.
- 4.3.4 Not be worn dangling around the neck or stored in a pocket.
- 4.3.5 Removed by handling only the ties and discarded appropriately when leaving the restricted area.
- 4.3.6 Changed between procedures or immediately when moist or visibly soiled
- 4.3.7 Fluid-resistant masks with a clear splashguard visor or alternate eye protection are recommended for all scrub personnel.
  - Reusable eye protection (such as goggles) should be cleaned and disinfected according to the manufacturer's instructions, before and after the personnel assists with each new procedure.
- 4.3.8 Consideration should be taken for the mask filtration level and the clinical situation (e.g. isolation precautions, plume, laser)
- 4.3.9 NIOSH approved (N95 or equivalent) respirator masks are recommended when caring for patients with airborne infections. If using an elastomeric reusable respirator, refer to <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-reuse-of-elastomeric-respirators.pdf>. See [Infection Prevention and Control Airborne Precautions](#) for more information.

**4.4 Footwear should have closed toes and backs, low heels, non-skid soles, and provide protection from injury due to items, sharps, or fluids that may be dropped. Shoes should be clean and dedicated for use within the perioperative area.**

- 4.4.1 Shoe covers should be worn in instances when gross contamination can reasonably be anticipated. Discard when soiled or leaving the perioperative environment and perform hand hygiene.

**4.5 Lead protective attire that may include aprons, vests, skirts, and collars shall be worn when performing radiological procedures if a portable shield is not provided or is not appropriate.**

- 4.5.1 Visually inspect radiation protective devices before donning
- 4.5.2 Radiation protective devices should be stored flat or hung vertically and never folded. Folding could lead to damage such as cracking, rendering the device less

effective. It is recommended that lead aprons be hung on heavy-duty chrome hangers and not on a hook.

**4.6 Identification badges should be worn secured to the scrub attire top or long-sleeved jacket and cleaned with low level disinfectant regularly or when it becomes soiled.**

4.6.1 Lanyards should not be worn in the OR setting.

**4.7 Make Up/ Fragrances**

4.7.1 Facial make up should be kept to a minimum.

4.7.2 ORs are designated “scent free zones.” Fragrances or scented hygiene products shall not be used/worn by staff. [Refer to: WRHA Dress Code Policy 20.10.020](#)

**4.8 Fingernails**

4.8.1 Fingernails shall be clean, short, natural, and appear healthy. Nail tip length should be no longer than 2mm. Nail lengths reaching beyond fingertips can tear gloves.

4.8.2 Fingernail polish should not be worn. Chipped or peeling polish may provide a harbor for microorganisms.

4.8.3 Artificial nails, extenders, enhancers, gel nails shall not be worn. Artificial nails and tips harbor higher numbers of organisms. Refer to [WRHA Dress Code Policy 20.10.020](#).

**4.9 All hand/arm jewelry (e.g. bracelets, rings, watches) shall be removed before entering the semi-restricted and restricted areas.**

4.9.1 Jewelry has been found to increase the bacterial count on skin, grate on the skin, and increase desquamation (ORNAC 2017).

4.9.2 All other jewelry (e.g. body piercings, earrings, necklaces, false lashes, etc.) or accessories shall be removed or confined within scrub attire.

**4.10 Personal devices and items**

4.10.1 Backpacks, fanny packs, purses, and briefcases are difficult to clean and may harbour microorganisms. These should not be taken into the semi restricted or restricted areas.

4.10.2 Cellular phones, tablets, and other personal communication or hand-held electronic devices should be cleaned with a low-level disinfectant according to the manufacturer’s instructions, before and after being brought into the perioperative setting and perform hand hygiene.

4.10.3 Personnel shall not eat, drink, smoke, apply cosmetics, handle contact lens, store food or personal belongings in restricted and semi-restricted areas (ORNAC, 2019).

**4.11 All personnel shall wear personal protective equipment as per [WRHA Routine Practices](#) and when there is a risk of exposure to biological/hazardous materials.**

4.11.1 An impervious gown shall be worn over the scrub suit when splashes from irrigation, blood, or body fluids are anticipated.

4.11.2 Appropriate protective eyewear shall be worn. If there is a risk for ocular splash, spray, or aerosolized blood or body fluids, protective eyewear that provides a side shield shall be worn.

4.11.3 Laser protective eyewear shall meet the safety standards for CO<sup>2</sup>, Nd:YAG and Ho:YAG lasers.

- 4.11.4 Non-sterile latex or vinyl gloves shall be worn to handle any materials or items contaminated by blood and body fluids. Gloves shall be removed immediately after use and hand hygiene shall be performed.
- 4.11.5 Isolation attire shall be worn for contact with patients on infection precautions/isolation as per Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA) with routine precautions and additional precautions as per WRHA Infection Control Manual.
- 4.11.6 NIOSH approved N95 masks or equivalent shall be worn for surgical patients infected with diseases with airborne transmission (e.g. suspected or confirmed active tuberculosis).
- 4.11.7 N95, laser masks or equivalent shall be worn for all laser surgery or for cases where a large amount of electrosurgical smoke is generated.
- 4.11.8 Other specific designated respiratory protection shall be worn according to specific infection control and workplace safety guidelines when indicated.

## 5. References

- (1) AORN (2019). Guidelines for Perioperative Practice. AORN Facility Reference Centre at <https://aornguidelines-org.umlwrha.idm.oclc.org/guidelines/content?sectionid=173717946&view=book>
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- (8) Winnipeg Regional Health Authority [Acute Care Infection Prevention & Control Manual](#).
- (9) Winnipeg Regional Health Authority [Policy 20.10.020, Dress Code](#).
- (10) Winnipeg Regional Health Authority X-ray Safety Committee (2013). X-ray safety manual: A manual of guidance, policies and procedures specific to the use of x-rays in diagnostic imaging, WRHA.

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